CDSS State Hub Roadmap
2018

Project Overview

As part of its ongoing commitment to continuously improve access to benefits by Californians in need of assistance, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is exploring options to streamline and modernize the processes for obtaining required verifications for CalFresh and CalWORKs eligibility. The goal is to make the verification process fast, accurate and efficient for both clients and program staff. To that end, CDSS has awarded a contract to Social Interest Solutions (SIS) to assist in analyzing the current environment of eligibility verifications for CalFresh and CalWORKs, perform an alternatives analysis of other verification processes being used in California and other states, and outline recommendations for moving forward in the short and long term.

Background

Eligibility determinations for CalFresh and CalWORKs are made by county eligibility workers (EWs) at initial certification, mid-period, and annual recertification. Eligibility determinations require three key steps: application, interview, and verification. Under federal and state rules, all relevant eligibility information must be verified, such as information about household composition, identity, residency, immigration and citizenship status, income, expenses, work activities, and disability. EWs use a variety of verification methods, including electronic data matching with trusted sources, review of paper documents provided by an applicant or recipient, collateral contacts with third parties, and client statements.

Use of paper documentation for verification can place additional burdens on clients and may create delays in processing if required documents are not readily available. Paper documentation may also require additional time to conduct eligibility determinations because EWs must compile, evaluate, scan, and archive the paper documents with the case record. In addition, there are challenges with the existing electronic verifications, which may fail to provide the most current or relevant data for required policy or create delay in processing if not readily available.

Approach

This project's goal is to provide CDSS with analysis and short and long-term recommendations on potential options – electronic and non-electronic – to improve existing verification processes for CalFresh and CalWORKs. The final deliverable is a written report, or Roadmap, that will include an analysis of the current environment, best practices from other states, suggested next steps for additional research and analysis that may be needed, as well potential options and recommendations. The Roadmap is not intended to provide a single solution for CDSS to implement, but rather to provide analysis and a range of options and opportunities for evaluation. In order to inform the analysis and recommendations, this project will heavily rely on input from stakeholders who represent diverse perspectives on CalFresh and CalWORKs, including consumer advocates, eligibility workers, program managers, county, state, national, policy, operations and technology perspectives.

Over the next several months, stakeholder input will be sought through:
- Interviews;
- Site visits;
- Focus groups; and
- Working sessions.

For more information, go to CDSS' project website State Hub Roadmap or contact statehub@dss.ca.gov.